

# The 24-hour Date

by Lisa Lim

1st hour. The recipe calls for fresh killer bumble bees. One pound of chicken parts. Six carrots. Great for colds. Four stars, the reviews read.

2nd hour. The bee stung me, my tough animal skin and I kept singing Basho's haiku, "from the heart of peony, a drunken bee, from the heart of a peony, a drunken bee, from the heart of a peony, a drunken bee" until my chicken bumble bee soup boiled over.

3rd hour. If only he hadn't French kissed me.

4th hour. It started with him asking me, from nowhere, so I noticed you don't like to French kiss.

5th hour. I don't know I stuttered. But I knew why. Yes, yes, yes, I'm one of them. Tongued at an early age by stepfather with a beard of shards. How did it feel? It felt like fish in my mouth trying to swim upstream. Tough and wet. I hate fish. That's not good. Go, tell all this to your mother, he said. She sat and watched sucking on cuttlefish. I didn't want to tell him but he made me so ashamed of not French kissing that I felt that I should shame him too.

6th hour. My throat is sore, he said. Are you sick? A bit. Well you shouldn't have asked me to French kiss you, I did not say.

7th hour. After one hour of awkward silence he tried to talk politics, but I am apolitical. Although, I used to write to Nancy Reagan to tell her how I loved her taste in dresses. In return for my bad chicken scratch and many exclamation points, I received one 8x10 glossy of her and Ronnie fishing in the finger lakes.

8th hour. Politics. Full stop. Enter childhood. Aim: intimacy. What did you dream of becoming as a child, I asked. I wanted to retire at 10, he said. I want to be the next Bill Gates. What about you? I wanted to be a hooker at five. Really. Either a hooker or a secretary. He was quiet.

9th hour. Desperate, I pulled out old stories written by my students in Japan one year.

What is your dream?

*I hope I'll be a dietitian in the future. The reason is that I like cooking and I want to know about health. When my dream comes true, I will cook dinner to my family. And my mother, father, sister will go to the superstore to buy pants with lining of spandex. — Wakako*

*My dream is to be a licensed accountant. The reason is that I watched TV program of a special edition when I was child. I think that the performer is neat. When my dream comes true, I will expose injustice. — Ayaka*

*My dream is a wedding planner. Because I hope happiness for all couples. I want to see a look of enchantment on one's face. And I will produce myself wedding some day. So I must study very hard. — Shino*

10th hour. He yawned. And spoke of commercial real estate for a while.

11th hour. Commercial real estate. Full stop. Enter anything. Aim: to never speak of commercial real estate. It was difficult for me. Because my mother made me like cotton candy, not a deep dark forest. Deep dark forests are handsome brained, but they know too much and cry cups of rain. And like to protest everything even the coffee beans they drink daily. Who's got time? Yes, my days are all clear and empty. But, I have no time. Somehow we returned to the subject of commercial real estate.

12th hour. I pretended to listen as I peeled carrots for the soup and thought of naked men fucking in an orgy with carrots in their ears. And heads of lovers sitting pretty on cake plates with shiny glass covers. Then I thought of peonies one man used to give me. He liked to place the stems in my asshole. Like a vase.

13th hour. Yes, there was once a man. I used to need to see him cum every day at 10pm to know if he was still in love with me. I used to say, If I don't see you cum, I think we are doomed. He used to say, you worry too much. Later, he became my runaway.

14th hour. Long time no fist, he sometimes greeted me with a raised ass. And shoved my hand in instead of coming. "Child, why have you come?" I asked him.

15th hour. The pot boiled and the bees began to turn soggy dots of yellow and the chicken tender and falling off its bone. I thought of my stepfather who used to cut up chicken heads for fifteen dollars an hour. He would dunk his hands in boiling water so the chicken hairs would melt from skin. Afterwards he lost his fingernails and became a cat de-clawed. But that didn't keep the fish from swimming in children mouths. Maybe diabetes will.

16th hour. We ate the chicken bumble bee soup and he said I looked pretty as a peony. I started singing "from a peony comes a drunken bee, from a peony comes a drunken bee." Then he drew a picture of these deeply lobed leaves and told me their scientific names. Strange things like *paeonia lactiflora*, *paeonia japonica*, and *paeonia wittmanniana*. I was impressed. I would never be able to pronounce them, but I liked the sound of them in his mouth. And his drawings. I rubbed my nose in his underarm where I liked to sniff and grow drunk from his locks of hair perfumed. As I drew drunken bees dancing beside them.

17th hour. Next, a venti mocha latte and a walk in the park. I told him, if you were a tree you'd be this one. It was tall and rigid with gnarled steel roots. Its branches perfectly spread. Not a leaf out of place. And that tree looks just like me. It is damp with noon rain and looks a wet pussycat in pain walking the flat earth. No bird dares to nest. He called me silly drunken bee.

18th hour. We watched kids tweeze snapping turtles out of the park grass. They dropped them into a styrofoam cup and called it the snap turtle home. When they grow up they will bite your arms off, their father said laughing. Another father whispered underneath his breath, well I wouldn't bring it home as a household pet, but to each his own. And they went their separate ways.

19th hour. Acorns began to fall from the sky and slapped him with the ferocity of bullets in a gang shooting. I told him he could boast of hickies on his neck on his second date. I grew suddenly hot and wanted to masturbate in the woods hysterical naked. To be drained of my life-blood. The caffeine made me restless. The trees tied me down. And I wanted the trees to listen to my squeals of pain that

were delight while they hid me. I didn't mind if a snap turtle watched or snapped at my pussy. But not him. Not yet. "Child, why have you come?" the trees asked me finally. I did not answer.

20th hour. Repurposing forgotten hardware. I used to use my vagina for sex. Now it's a tampon machine. I shove two sometimes three slim ones in there because I have run out of supers. I always tell men I have my period and dangle my strings for proof. False to him. I will never be found.

21st hour. In the park we compared breasts. My breasts are flat, he said. Mine are swollen from my period, I said.

22nd hour. He taught me how to French kiss again. I failed thinking of fish again.

23rd hour. I tell him I tried to vote once and pulled the lever before choosing a candidate. But how? I don't know.

The clock read the 24th hour. I wanted to say, I am waiting for you. I will never. I will not. I will try to not. But, I may abandon you. Do not abandon me. It was selfish. This I know. So, yes, I do not grudge your escape.

